

As the communications supervisor for a Federal Emergency Management Agency chartered ESS/CERT Task Force Team attached to the Cincinnati Fire Department Weapons of Mass Destruction response unit I would like to attach our support in favor of the amateur license restructuring proposed by the ARRL.

One of our primary missions is to provide emergency communications by various means on both public safety and amateur radio frequencies. As a matter of furthering the cause of Homeland Security and our mission and the mission of teams like ours across the U.S. we would derive great benefit by having our "technician" class license holders grandfathered to "General" and given access to HF bands currently not available to them. Due to the nature of our mission "CW" is not a practical communications medium and the current "CW" or code requirement for license access to HF bands prevents a number of our personnel from using HF in the furtherance of our mission to our part of the country.

We have been working diligently with the regional representatives of the ARRL to come to an arrangement that everyone could live with and that arrangement is contained in the ARRL proposal now before the commission.

In the interest of Homeland Security, among other things, we would urge the commission to quickly move to adopt and implement the ARRL proposal for amateur license restructuring.

In the past the U.S. Department of Defense has submitted written comment to the commission in which they stated that "amateur radio was vital to the interest of national security". That was before the events of September 11, 2001. It is our belief that NOW, more than ever, amateur radio will play a vital role in the interest of U.S. national security. The proposed license restructuring submitted by the ARRL and currently before the commission will allow teams such as ours to expand our capability and make use of additional personnel that we already have trained in the other services that we provide thereby better enabling us to fulfill our mission.

We understand that no one is going to be completely happy with any proposed change to the amateur licensing structure but we submit that the ARRL proposal is by far the best overall solution for both amateur radio and the interest that it serves whether as a technical "hobby" or as a vital part of national security.

Lt. Steve Helton, N8RTY
Communications Supervisor
Emergency Support Services
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Cincinnati CERT Task Force
Cincinnati Fire Department Regional WMD Response Team
shelton@ess-cert.org